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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001848

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: MINNAWI'S POSITION ON THE DPA EVOLVES

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1838
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1645

Classified By: A/CDA Mark Asquino, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a December 28 meeting with poloffs, Senior Assistant to the President Minni Arko Minnawi stated that he has chosen not to travel to Washington in January because he anticipates significant political and/or military developments in Sudan and Darfur in the coming weeks. He acknowledged the defection of two senior members of his movement to rival JEM, and briefed poloffs on his visit to Asmara to meet with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerke. He also spoke of his upcoming trip to Cairo at the behest of the Arab League. Minnawi is still waiting to be contacted by Qatari officials to give his views on proposed peace talks in Doha, but on December 28 SLM-MM Secretary for Political Affairs Abdel Gabar-Dosa affirmed to the press that SLM-MM wants to participate independently of the GOS at the Doha talks. Minnawi was unaware of reports of cross-border fighting in Kulbus in West Darfur, but Egyptian sources reported that on December 26 Chadian armed forces fired heavy artillery across the border with Sudan, reportedly resulting in three SAF casualties and possible SAF retaliation. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On the evening of the December 28, poloffs met with Senior Assistant to the President Minni Arko Minnawi at his home in Khartoum for the second time in a week (ref A). Minnawi told poloffs that he is unable to travel to Washington because he anticipates significant political and/or military developments in the coming weeks. In addition to the potential announcement of an ICC indictment of President Bashir, Minnawi speculated that "maybe Khalil will be crossing the border soon." Minnawi acknowledged the defection of two senior figures in his movement to JEM: Chief of Staff Arko Suleiman Dahia and Deputy Commander in Chief Bakhit Karima. He stated that the two were involved in the same treacherous activity as Mustafa Tirab, whom Minnawi removed as Secretary General on October 24 (ref B). Minnawi claimed that the defections involved only eight people in total. (Note: A statement on the JEM website claimed that the defectors numbered 400. End Note.) Minnawi also noted that NISS Chief Salah Gosh traveled to Geneina on December 27, a visit that according to press reports served to inaugurate new NISS facilities in West Darfur.

[1](#)3. (C) Minnawi briefed poloffs on his recent visit to Asmara for meetings with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerke. With regard to Darfur, Minnawi said that Afwerke believes a holistic, comprehensive approach to Sudan's problems is needed rather than the existing piecemeal, regional peace agreements, and that "the NCP is the root of all problems and

needs to go," said Minnawi. (Comment: Minnawi could not explain how this alleged statement by Afwerke squared with the currently warm relationship between Khartoum and Asmara. End comment.) Afwerke was also reportedly highly critical of the SPLM. "He said that they've done nothing for South Sudan, despite receiving \$5 billion in three years." Afwerke also criticized the SPLM for failing to stem growing tribal conflict in the South. Afwerke characterized the Chad-Sudan proxy war as a vicious cycle, noting that neither Chad nor Sudan wants to be the first to halt assistance to the others rebels.

14. (C) Minnawi said that within the next week he would travel to Cairo at the behest of the Arab League to share his views on Darfur. He credited the invitation to his previous criticism of the Arab League for its support of the GOS, as well as his revelation to them that funds they donated for humanitarian purposes were diverted by Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail to the GOS for other purposes. "I don't believe they will offer anything to me, but I welcome their invitation to express my views," he said. (Note: Egyptian poloff Tamer Azzam characterized the visit as a chance to hear Minnawi's vision for the peace process. "Minnawi knows what he doesn't want, but not what he does," he remarked. End Note.) Minnawi stated that upon returning from Cairo, he anticipates returning to Darfur.

15. (C) Despite his invitation from the Arab League to go to Cairo, Minnawi said he has yet to be contacted by Qatar for his views on the proposed Doha peace talks. "They've met with Abdul Wahid in France, JEM in Doha, and even (unaffiliated) individuals," he said. "I think perhaps the government

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instructed them not to meet with me." (Note: On December 28 The Sudan Tribune published statements from SLM-MM Secretary for Political Affairs Abdel-Gabar Dosa asserting that SLM-MM wants to participate in the proposed Doha talks. End Note.)

16. (C) Minnawi was unable to confirm rumors of clashes in Kulbus along the Sudan-Chad border. However, Egyptian poloff Azzam, citing Egyptian military officers within UNAMID, stated that on the evening of December 26 Chadian armed forces apparently fired heavy artillery across the border into Sudan, resulting in three SAF casualties. SAF reportedly retaliated and informed UNAMID of the incident, he said. UNAMID sources were unable to confirm the fighting to poloff, though many UNAMID officials are currently on leave.

17. (C) Comment: Minnawi's upcoming meeting with the Arab League in Cairo (and hopefully, Doha) combined with the statements of SLM-MM's Dosa, indicate that the movement may have finally come to understand the need to move beyond the DPA. This newfound willingness on the part of SLM-MM could ease one of the many barriers to an elusive comprehensive settlement on Darfur - and we should take advantage of this development. Post encourages additional messages to the Qatari mediation team to reach out to Minnawi and encourage him to visit Doha shortly after his visit to Cairo.

ASQUINO